

Minutes

Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel

Minutes of the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel held on Friday 14 September 2012, in The Council Chamber, Milton Keynes Council Civic Offices, 1 Saxon Gate East, Central Milton Keynes, MK9 3EJ, commencing at 10.00 am and concluding at 11.31 am.

Members Present

Councillor Mark Booty (West Oxfordshire District Council), Councillor Anita Cranmer (South Buckinghamshire District Council), Trevor Egleton (Buckinghamshire County Council) (Chairman), Councillor Peter Geary (Milton Keynes Council), Councillor Bill Jones (Vale of White Horse District Council), Councillor Kieron Mallon (Oxfordshire County Council) (Vice-Chairman), Councillor George Reynolds (Cherwell District Council), Councillor Bill Service (South Oxfordshire District Council) and Rajinder Sohpal

Officers Present

Reece Bowman and Clare Gray

Apologies

Noel Brown (Chiltern District Council), David Carroll (Wycombe District Council), Councillor Jesse Gray (Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead), Councillor Iain McCracken (Bracknell Forest Council), Councillor Tony Page (Reading Borough Council), Cllr Barrie Patman (Wokingham Borough Council), Councillor Pam Pearce (Aylesbury Vale District Council), Councillor Mohammed Sharif (Slough Borough Council) and Cllr Dee Sinclair (Oxford City Council)

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 July 2012 were agreed as a correct record subject to including Councillor Jesse Gray in apologies.

Councillor Kieron Mallon expressed concern about the number of apologies given for this meeting and suggested that it was worth reviewing the Panel arrangements in relation to substitutes. He proposed having named deputies to ensure having a Member who was briefed and familiar with the subject matter. It was important to have a robust approach to scrutiny in the Thames Valley. Members agreed that a report on this issue should be considered.

3. Chairman's Update

The Chairman gave the following updates:-

- He referred to the new regulations which came out on 5 September 2012 which referred to the veto of the proposed precept and handling of reserve.
- There was an updated report in relation to item 6 because of the new regulations and a revised work programme.
- Future dates included:-

Police Familiarisation Day – 25 September 2012
Community Safety Briefing – 11 October 2012
London Police Assembly visit – 25 October 2012
First meeting with PCC – 6 December 2012

4. Ratification of Co-optees

Members noted that there were 34 applicants who applied for the role of co-opted Member for the Panel. There was a very strong field and a thorough process was undertaken applying strict scoring criteria on short listing. Those with the highest scores were chosen for interview which was five candidates. One Justice of the Peace dropped out due to the current guidance regarding JP's but decided not to come back into the process once JP's had been reinstated. Therefore 4 candidates were interviewed. The two candidates chosen were:-

- Terry Burke – operational policing experience at the Metropolitan Police at a senior level; currently working at a strategic level dealing with security issues; broad experience of various forces across the UK
- Rajinder Sohpal – strong knowledge of policing; very active in the community; good eye for detail and analysing detail; 8 years of experience as a Non Executive Director of a Healthcare Trust.

The Vice-Chairman reported that all 34 applicants could have brought different things to the Panel but they had chosen Terry Burke for his strategic overview and Rajinder Sohpal for his link into policing and community activities at a local level.

RESOLVED

That Terry Burke and Rajinder Sohpal be ratified as Co-opted Members of the Panel.

5. Work Programme

An updated report was circulated.

The Scrutiny Officer reported that the first meeting of the Panel with the Commissioner will be an important occasion marking the beginning of a statutory relationship. He therefore proposed that a conference might be a good way of raising the profile of the meeting. Members noted that new regulations had been issued around the operation of the veto over the proposed precept and the proposed candidate for the post of Chief Constable. An overview of the regulations is set out within the report. A revised work programme was set out at Appendix A of the report.

Within the document he referred to the following four recommendations:-

Recommendation 1: It is recommended that:

- a) The PCP host a conference on the same day as the first meeting with the PCC, as described in paragraphs 3-9
- b) The PCP mandate the organisation and publicising of the event by the PCP Scrutiny Officer

Recommendation 2: It is recommended that the PCP, at its informal meeting on 11th October, shortlists police and crime priorities to raise with the PCC in December

Recommendation 3: It is recommended that, where necessary, the PCP agree dates for each meeting detailed within the proposed work programme at Appendix A

Recommendation 4: It is recommended that the PCP agree the revised work programme at Appendix A.

Members discussed the recommendations and made the following comments:-

New regulations

- There was a very tight timescale in terms of the Panel's response on the proposed precept in February.
- The Commissioner only has to 'have regard' to the recommendations made by the Panel and publish a response to them by 1 March.
- The watering down of the Panel's powers could be to avoid a stalemate situation.
- The Panel only has power to change the level of precept saying whether it is too high or too low. Members would also want to discuss the detail of the budget and whether the service delivery planned was adequate.
- There would be more discussion about the second year of the budget once the new system had 'bedded in'. The first year of the budget would be rushed and would be a learning curve for all involved.
- The Panel would need to use its influence to persuade the Commissioner to agree the Panel recommendations.

Conference

- A Member expressed concern about questioning the Commissioner before they had settled in.
- Other Members were in agreement and suggested that it would be useful to hold a Conference in July 2013 once the precept and plan had been agreed.
- A Member commented that the first meeting should be used to inform the Commissioner how the Panel would operate and that early challenge was important.
- The Vice-Chairman commented that it was important to operate in an efficient way and ensure that an officer's time was not wasted and referred to Council's sharing officers. He also suggested that the meeting should not be all day and where possible meetings should be webcast to avoid unnecessary travel.
- A proposal was made that a meeting is held on 6 December 2012 to have presentations from the Commissioner, Chief Constable and Chairman. The meeting would start with each presenter having a 10 minute slot. There could be a lunchtime session which would give stakeholders an opportunity for discussion. A Member queried whether a presentation was needed from the Chief Constable and it was agreed that this was important, particularly to distinguish the different roles of the Chief Constable, Commissioner and Panel.
- The conference in July would give a wider opportunity for partners to have an input into the Panel's work programme and priorities.
- The issue of webcasting would need to be investigated. Whilst it would be good to webcast, this had to be balanced with rotating venues across all Authorities in the Thames Valley, some of which did not have webcasting facilities.
- Members agreed that the meeting in December should be held at the Oculus in Aylesbury.

October Meeting

- Members agreed to have a private meeting on 11 October 2012 to discuss police and crime priorities. The Safer Bucks Partnership Manager was preparing a document for discussion at this meeting.

Pre- Briefing Meeting

- Members agreed to hold a briefing session prior to the formal meeting on 6 December, which could include a presentation by the Chief Executive of the Police Authority. Members suggested meeting on 30 November 2012 at Kidlington.

- Meetings needed to be planned and booked for the following year.

RESOLVED

1) The Panel have an extended meeting on 6 December 2012 which will include presentations by the Commissioner, Chairman of the Panel and Chief Constable before the formal meeting takes place [due to administration arrangements the presentations may form part of the formal meeting].

2) The Panel, at its private meeting on 11th October, shortlists police and crime priorities to raise with the Commissioner in December

3) Dates for each meeting detailed within the proposed work programme at Appendix A of the report were agreed.

4) The Panel agreed the revised work programme at Appendix A of the report.

6. Topic Selection and Referral Protocol

The Scrutiny Officer presented his report which set out a procedure in relation to selecting and referring scrutiny topics. The Panel already has a significant work programme and in order to ensure that the right issues are prioritised for discussion a protocol has been drafted on topic selection and referral, particularly relating to the non-statutory, discretionary component. Other topics may be referred to other bodies for discussion such as Community Safety Partnerships or Council's Scrutiny Committees. If these criteria are agreed they will not be binding on the Panel due to clauses in the Panel's Rules of Procedure allowing Panel Members to place items onto the agenda.

During discussion the following points were made:-

- There was a general agreement that the scoring should not be weighted as this would be unwieldy.
- The Panel as a strategic body should be disciplined to prioritise work and not allow Members to become too parochial. Councils still had a role to play in local issues.
- There had been a previous discussion about whether the Chairman and Vice-Chairman should have powers to prioritise the work programme but this was not agreed.
- Pre-meetings could be used to discuss topic selection.
- Some topics could be raised that related to a specific issue related to a locality or Thames Valley as a whole.
- As the Panel will not work in isolation, an issue may be referred to another body such as a Local Authority Scrutiny Committee for consideration and the Chairman would write to the body concerned.
- The protocol could be reviewed after a year.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the Panel agreed the proposed topic selection criteria at paragraph 8 of the report.**
- 2. That the agreed criteria, for simplicity, should replicate Model B (See Appendix B of the report) and not be weighted.**
- 3. That, initially, topic selection and referral be handled by the full Panel in pre-meetings for ratification in public session.**

7. PCP Lines of Enquiry and Evidence

The Scrutiny Officer presented a report to suggest lines of enquiry that the Panel may wish to address on an ongoing basis. The Chairman reported that to exercise influence the Panel should aim to develop with the Commissioner a relationship based on constructive 'critical friend' challenge. The following key lines of enquiry were proposed:-

- A. To what extent is the Commissioner communicating with the public
- B. Is the Commissioner involving others in decision making to a sufficient extent?
- C. To what extent is the Commissioner successfully balancing national and local priorities?
- D. To what extent is the Commissioner steering the police service?

The Scrutiny Officer referred to evidence sources and commented that the work of the Panel should be evidence-based and therefore will rely upon various sources. There is high level performance information that the Panel may wish to monitor on a frequent basis as an indicator of PCC performance and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman could report to the Panel on this issue in December, looking at the current reporting used by the Thames Valley Police Authority. Benchmarking would also give some indication of the overall impact of the Commissioner by setting a benchmark early on and evaluating the performance indicators periodically.

During discussion the following points were made:-

- The Panel needs to look at the Commissioner's performance and whether their priorities and policies are right for the Thames Valley.
- The Commissioner needs to focus on strategic rather than operational issues.
- Members agreed that the wording needed to be changed on page 16 of the report (D) to remove 'steering' and replace it with 'leading'.
- Members emphasised the importance of influencing the Commissioner on budgetary issues and making sure issues such as Domestic Abuse are maintained as a priority because it can often be a hidden crime that does not make headlines. Domestic Abuse has been a priority for the Community Safety Partnership in Oxfordshire for two years. The Panel needed to raise the profile of issues where funding was required.

The Chairman thanked the Scrutiny Officer for his work on this issue.

RESOLVED

- 1. The Panel needs to consider further lines of enquiry to be pursued on an ongoing basis.**
- 2. The Panel allow the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to develop a reporting schedule to be incorporated into the Panel's Work Programme, to be ratified at a later date by the Panel**
- 3. Proposals around how best to use performance data to hold the Commissioner to account be developed by the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman for presentation to the Panel.**

8. Date of Next Meeting

25 September - Policing Familiarisation Day

11 October – Private meeting - Community Safety and Scrutiny Skills

25 October – Visit to the London Assembly

30 November – Pre meeting for December meeting with the Commissioner

6 December – Formal Meeting

The Panel will need to meet week commencing 28 January 2013 to discuss the budget and the week commencing 11 February 2013 to consider the Commissioner's response if veto over precept was exercised by the Panel.

CHAIRMAN